1: Rosen E-5 (1901-1902) 1924 SK6 Choroti SK6

wooden awl, so that blood flows.[1] In reply to my question, Nordenskiöld has been kind enough to tell me that he never saw the Indians using awls of any other material than wood for this purpose. On the other hand, both he and I, and other Chaco students, have seen Choroti pricking themselves with bone awls (figs. 185 and 186) when feeling tired. In order to ascertain whether the Indians in making their bone awls gave preference to any particular bone of any particular animal, I asked Professor Lönnberg to try and identify the animals from which the material had been taken for all the bone awls in my collection. Professor Lönnberg very kindly acceded to my request, and here below I give the result of his investigation.[2]

Awl No. 03. 3. 183. Upper part of right ulna of a large feline animal, probably a female puma.
» » 03. 3. 82. » » » left » » » feline animal, probably a young puma.
» » 03. 3. 183. » » » » » » » » (somewhat smaller than the foregoing).
» » 03. 3. 84. Lower part of canon bone of small ruminant (deer calf?).
» » 03. 3. 184. » » » » » » » »
» » 03. 3. 185. » » » » » » » »
» » 03. 3. 83. Probably a fragment of ulna of a bird (raptorial?)
» » 03. 3. 186. » » » » » » » » of a species somewhat smaller than the foregoing.

The remainder of the bone awls that were submitted by me to Professor Lönnberg consisted of fragments, impossible of determination.

Unquestionably, it must strike one as peculiar that out of eight determinable pieces of bone, three of them probably consist of ulnæ of such a ferocious animal as the puma (the killing of which to the Indians is a matter of deadly peril). Another thing, which is in my opinion noteworthy, is that two of the awls probably consist of ulnæ of raptorial birds, and that the three remaining ones all consist of canon bones of some species of small ruminant. In fig. 81 I have reproduced an awl consisting of the jawbone of a Siluroid: this implement, however, at the same time being a kind of stamp for applying red paint to the face. Whilst paying a visit to the Gothenburg Museum, I was, by the courtesy of the Keeper of Ethnography, Baron Nordenskiöld, given the opportunity of going through the collection of bone awls that he has acquired from Indians of the Chaco, which collection now forms part of the Museum. On examining

[1] Nordenskiöld (13), p. 49.

[2] In accordance with letters dated July 3 and 18, respectively. Rockefeller collection of Manuscripts, Volume 1931, letter 1..

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco

Choroti SKb

761 body the patient will die, *i.e.* his soul will be compelled to leave its abode. The exertions of the medicine-man again are aimed at expelling the evil intruder.

755 To conjure a disease-demon, that is, to expel it from the body of the patient by incantations and other magical means, is in the Choroti language called *apáhu*. The conjurations nearly always take place in the night or after darkness sets in. This is due to the idea, referred to above, that the night is the special time of the evil spirits. The natives of the Chaco are strengthened in this belief by the fact that catarrhs and other ailments from which they suffer are as a rule worse during the cold nights, whereas in the day-time when the sun is spreading warmth they are less felt. The treatment of the patient takes place outside the hut, generally under a shady algaroba tree, the place where the men assemble for their meetings and drinking-feasts.

The procedure is always about the same. The medicine-man begins his treatment by spitting and blowing vigorously on the particular spot of the body where the evil is seated, and this action is from time to time repeated. This is done to »disinfect» the spot and to prepare it favourably for the extraction of the »arrow». Beneficial purifying effects [827] are commonly ascribed to the saliva, and a medicine-man's saliva is particularly sacred, being imbued with the magic power which fills his whole body. Thereupon the conjuration proper begins. The »doctor» leans over the patient, closes his hand so as to form a tube, puts it on the sick spot and starts to sing, in a low muttering voice, a monotonous chant, ejaculating certain powerful words addressed to the evil demon. The chant mostly consists of refrains; it is evident that the efficacy of the conjuration is mainly ascribed to the voice itself and the breath of the curer, as well as to the very rhythm of the chant. The words or phrases uttered by the Choroti medicine-man are very stereotyped; in fact, they almost invariably seem to consist of the words: *náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . . náuhea, náuhea, hiame, hiame . . .* incessantly repeated, and only interrupted by the blowing, spitting, and other manipulations. Both words belong to the particular terminology of the medicine-men: *náuhea* means »at night», and *hiame* »go away!» The whole conjuration may thus be translated into: »When night sets in, go away, evil demon!» The phrase has reference to the fact that the evil spirits which cause sickness are believed to move about especially at night, and the doctor is trying, by his conjuration, to prevent the demons from coming back at that critical time to molest the patient. Exactly the same idea appears

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913) 1932 SI7 Mataco SI7
Toba SI12
Choroti SK6

tion to the men shaking rattles, one or more Indians are beating drums and chanting. These noisy ceremonies are continued with short intervals during the whole night. When one party of Indians are tired and stop to rest for a moment, they are relieved by another party, since it is considered very important that there should be no interruption in the ceremonies, otherwise they would lose something of their effect. In the early morning the danger is believed to have passed; the fermentation has taken place, and the evil spirits have not been able to approach the drink and spoil it.

Although this negative object of the rites is particularly emphasized by the Indians, they also have a positive object which is indicated by the very expression »hurry on the fermentation». As we have already seen, the fruit of which the drink is made is believed to be animated by a spirit, and it is the same spirit that is active in the fermented, intoxicating beer. The rites described, while they are supposed to keep off evil spirits, are also intended to influence magically the plant-spirit itself and to bring it to its highest point of development, which is marked by the fermentation. This is partly effected through the chanting, the shaking of rattles, and the drumming, partly through the procedure of mixing the mashed fruit with saliva. The saliva really has the property of bringing about fermentation, and this phenomenon is explained by the superstitious Indian as due to the supernatural virtues which this secretion is believed to possess. Even the fact that only *old* women chew the fruit is probably not accidental. Old people have by nature a stronger magical power than the young and their saliva has therefore greater efficacy.

The Chaco Indians not only try to promote the growth of the fruits by shaking rattles and drumming, but also by *dancing*. Thus the Toba dance *Nahát dónnaran* is not only performed in cases of sickness, but also with a view to »hurrying on» the chanar fruit (*niapilák tákkai*). Once I witnessed such a ceremony. The chañar fruit — next to the algaroba the most important of the fruits growing in the Chaco forests — reaches maturity in the month of October and forms the staple food of the Indians during that month. The dance was performed in the following way. The fruit gathered in during the day was spread out on cloths or big hides on the ground outside the houses, where they are generally laid to dry. The dance took place at night. A young man began to dance alone, stamping alternately with his feet on the ground, without using any rattle and chanting at first in a low voice. Gradually his movements

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

Chapter XVII.

Magical ornaments and amulets.

In my *Civilization of the South American Indians* I have shown that most Indian ornaments have originally had a purely magical significance, although among tribes affected by European culture they have gradually lost this significance and become real »decorations». Among the Chaco Indians also this course of development is conspicuous, for instance with regard to tattooing, body-painting, and the majority of other personal ornaments. The principles of *tattooing*, as it is practised by the Choroti, Mataco, and Tobas, have been set forth by me in a previous chapter.[1]) Tattooing is first of all closely related to scarification and bleeding, customs quite commonly practised by the Indians in all parts of South America. Blood-letting is in itself regarded as a method of purifying the human organism from evil and impure spirits. The spirits are supposed to enter the system, and especially to mix in the blood, thus giving rise to ailments of different kinds and to a state of weakness in the particular part of the body to which they have attached themselves. The Indian thinks that by bleeding that part he will rid himself of the dangerous intruder, just as he sometimes thinks it will leave his body with the mere perspiration, and this belief is naturally supported by the fact that in certain cases such purgations may really give some relief. The Chaco Indians are quite familiar with this idea. Thus among the *Choroti* it is a common thing for the men to bleed themselves with a sharp bone obtained from a certain »magical» animal or a splinter of a certain wood before certain important undertakings. Thus they say that, by drawing blood from the arm, the limb will get more strength for pulling the bow; the practice is therefore especially

M 789

M 783 827

C 783 827 224

[1]) See *supra*, pp. 89 sq.

[p. 179]

2: Karsten E-5 (1911-1913)1932 SI7 Mataco SI7

Choroti SK6

resorted to before going out on a hunting expedition. If the arms fails or trembles in pulling the bow, its weakness is, according to the idea of the Choroti, due to the presence of a *mohsek* in the blood; and they think that the evil demon will leave the body with the blood drawn. The same custom is practised by other tribes of the Pilcomayo. Thus Nordenskiöld noticed it among the Ashluslay, although he did not understand its real meaning. After a trying fishing or hunting expedition, he says, the Indians may be seen to pierce their arms and legs furiously with hard wooden splinters, so that the blood flows in streams; and in order to get a keener sight to find the nests of the bees they likewise prick themselves above the eyes. In both cases the idea evidently is that the demon which causes the weakness or fatigue will be driven away from the body and perhaps killed with the pointed instrument.

The scars left by the cuts are tended with care and shown with satisfaction, indeed with pride. The Indians showed with apparent satisfaction even those cicatrices which the *palometa* fishes had inflicted on their body with their sharp teeth when they were bathing in the river. It is clear that according to the idea of the Indians not only the bleeding purges the body from impure matter and strengthens the limbs, but that the very scars which remain after the operation possess some mysterious power to keep off evil influences, a power which is much the same as that ascribed to real tattooing marks. This Indian view is especially conspicuous in regard to an operation which the whites sometimes perform upon Indians who have come in contact with European civilization, namely, vaccination. I could myself appreciate the extraordinary importance ascribed to scars when during my stay at Esperanza I vaccinated a number of Chaco Indians who were employed as labourers at the sugar factory. The Christians probably have no remedy which the natives understand so well as this one, and they therefore as a rule submitted to the vaccine inoculation without remonstration, in fact, with pleasure. The small indelible marks which remained were regarded with wonder and admiration, and it was perfectly understood that they were a sort of warranty that the terrible disease would not attack the person wearing them.

Of all personal ornaments *body-painting* is the most important. All Chaco tribes practise it, and men and women alike. In the Chaco, as in other parts of South America, body-painting is essentially a custom of magical significance, as one can easily find out by considering the circumstances under which it is practised. The favourite colour of the